DE WALLEN

AMSTERDAM'S RED LIGHT DISTRICT



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL D. TEOLI JR.





DEDICATION

IN HONOR OF

TOM HOWARD & MURRAY BECKER

TWO GREATS FROM THE ANNALS OF DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY HISTORY

"IT IS PART OF THE PHOTOGRAPHERS JOB TO SEE MORE INTENSELY THAN MOST PEOPLE DO. HE MUST HAVE AND KEEP IN HIM SOMETHING OF THE RECEPTIVENESS OF THE CHILD WHO LOOKS AT THE WORLD FOR THE FIRST TIME OR OF THE TRAVELER WHO ENTERS A STRANGE COUNTRY." ~ BILL BRANDT

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DE WALLEN

AMSTERDAM'S RED LIGHT DISTRICT

SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY
BY
DANIEL D. TEOLI JR.

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Introduction

Amsterdam's De Wallen or De Walletjes is one of the largest and most notorious red light districts in the world. De Wallen has a long history of tolerated and then legalized prostitution that dates back to premedieval times. It has had many ups and downs over the centuries. In 2014, I spent 5 days there...this is what I documented.



Living / working space with a sagging bed of a whore. The attic is shared with other families. 1919 Amsterdam. Photographer: unknown, Dutch National Archives, The Hague, Het Leven (LEVEN 022) collection, license CC-BY-SA

Prostitution is legal in much of Europe. No other country has made such a tourist destination out of it as has Amsterdam.



Prostitutes in Schipperskwartier (sailor's quarter) Antwerp, Belgium 1929. Photographer: unknown, Dutch National Archives, The Hague, Het Leven (LEVEN 022) collection, license CC-BY-SA

Virtually none of the prostitutes working the Red Light District are Dutch. Currently there are about 300 to 400 *kamers* or 'red rooms' that are worked by an estimated 1000 female / transvestite / transgender prostitutes in De Wallen.

The Netherlands has been listed as one of the top destinations for victims of human trafficking. Prostitution in Amsterdam has major ties to organized crime. Some of the prostitutes are drug abusers and it becomes a life on a treadmill where they must work to support their drug habit and stay addicted in order to work.



Heroin user. Dutch National Archives, The Hague, Photographer: unknown, Fotocollectie Spaarnestad Onderwerpen collection, access number 7.000SPAond, file number 212038 057, license CC-BY-SA

Daniel D. Teoli Jr. April 5, 2015



De Wallen, (The Wall) Amsterdam's colorful Red Light District at night.



Opposite: Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) is a major landmark of Dam Square. The Dam, as it is known locally, is a main entry point for the Red Light District. Below: Dam Square.





The National Monument in Dam Square was a popular sleeping spot for hippies in the 1960's until it was outlawed. (See green oval opposite page.)

Bottom photo by Bert Verhoeff / Anefo, 25 August 1970, Damslapers Amsterdam, Dutch National Archives, The Hague, Anefo collection, reference number 2.24.01.05, inventory number 923-7795, license CC-BY-SA





The Red Light District is a few blocks past Nieuwe Kerk (New Church). It is no longer used as a church but hosts exhibitions and recitals. Sometimes New Church is used for other purposes as well...





Canal cruises, day or night, are a leisurely way to view the Red Light District. You will have great views with the wrap around windows.





The Red Light District streets are narrow. Bicycles and small scooters are the most practical means of getting around.





Beside prostitution, Amsterdam is also known for its liberal drug policy. Opposite: A young man showing off his freshly rolled joint.



A heroin addict at the Nieuwmarkt. Amsterdam, April 3, 1984, Photographer: unknown, Dutch National Archives, The Hague, ANP (ANP 042) collection, license CC-BY-SA



Opposite: Amsterdam is a cannabis connoisseurs delight!

Below: A shop worker taking a break.





A popular Red Light District cruise with young people is the 'bring your own booze and dope' cruise.

Drugs are plentiful in the Red Light District and are a major attraction for tourism. You can buy seeds, hashish and all sort of cannabis food products. A joint sells for €2.50.

Beside the legal and regulated cannabis coffee shops, there are also many aggressive street dealers in the Red Light District and around the hostels selling cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, opium, LSD, and psychedelic mushrooms.



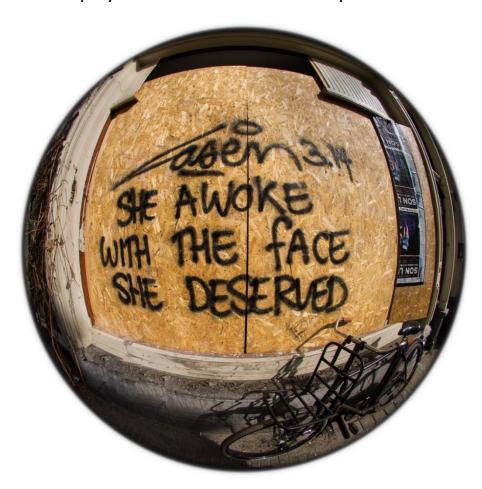
Opposite: A shop's colorful display for psychedelic 'magic' mushrooms. They were made illegal in 2008, but the shops legally sell magic truffles, or philosopher's stones, which work along the same lines.



Photo by Ted Dobson, Mary and Jesus snorting heroin at a bar in the back of a shop. They call the drugs 'food for thought' Amsterdam 1977, Dutch National Archives, The Hague, Spaarnestad collection, access number 7.000SPAond, file number 212047_104, license CC-BY-SA



Opposite: The display window of a condom shop. Below: RLD Graffiti





In the daytime you would never know that Oude Kerk (Old Church) lies in the midst of the Red Light District.



In 1993 an anonymous artist installed a bronze relief of a hand fondling a woman's breast in Oudekerksplein. (Old Church Square). The artwork was placed in honor of the prostitutes' service to man throughout history. In 2007 a statue named 'Belle' was installed nearby with the inscription 'Respect sex workers all over the world.'

Belle statue photo Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons - photo credit Romeo Reidl





In the daytime Oudekerksplein is a church courtyard. But in afternoon the red lights go on.



A display of postcards for sale.



Opposite: A window display for a sex shop in the Red Light District.

Below: An apartment window display.





Every Saturday afternoon the bachelor stag and bachelorette hen parties descend upon the Red Light District.





A hen party from Brussels. They wouldn't let me take a photo unless I paid €10. After I took this photo the girl in the middle put her greasy hand on my lens. The lens was ruined until I could clean it. I told them I wasn't going to pay any money, but I offered to install one of my photo stickers on the bride-elect which was dressed as a nun. They told me it would cost €5 to put a sticker on her. I told them to forget it. They said OK, put the sticker on her stomach, which I did. After I stuck *Pole Dancer of Ross County Ohio* on her they marched off cheering!





It rained for half a day, but by nighttime things had dried up.





A painting in an art gallery in the Red Light District. A local told me that a prostitute was the model. I have no idea if this is true...but it wouldn't be the first time.

Poem My Madonna by Robert W. Service

The Trustee for the Estate of Robert W. Service did not respond to requests to license *My Madonna* for use in this book.

You can Google it if you like. An apropos poem indeed.



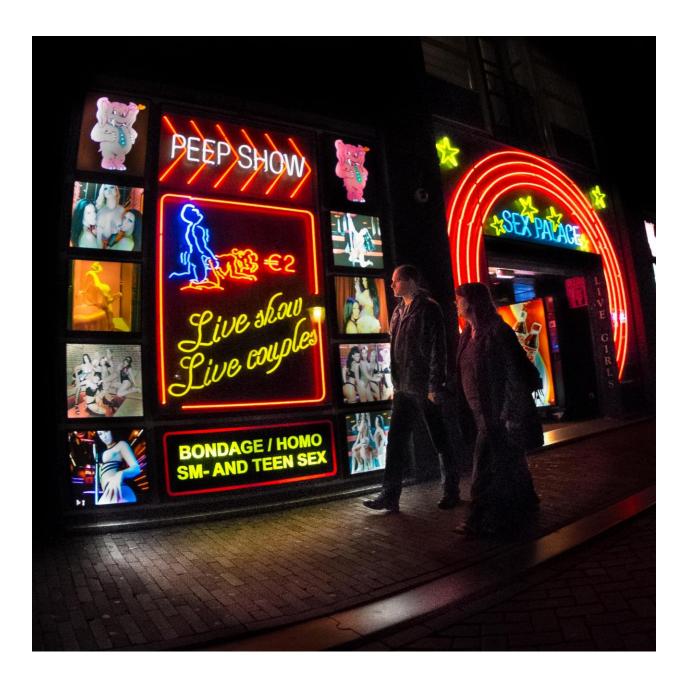
Opposite: A poster for Wasteland. There are many live sex shows in the Red Light District. On average, shows are about €40...girls are extra.





The Sex Palace offers private video booths for €2...per minute.

Porn peep shows were very popular before the internet age. Customers could get warmed up and then visit a prostitute. Nowadays, video peep shows are becoming a thing of the past with all the free internet porn.



Opposite: An example of a video peep booth. This is what video porn looked like before the internet. Below: A sign outside a video booth.





The lights tell the story...well most of the time.

Blue lights signify the prostitute is a male transvestite / transgender, red lights are for female. A mix of blue and red lights advertise the transvestite / transgender take on all comers...male or female. Although some transvestites try to pass for women with red lights only.

The prostitutes have their own union De Rode Draad. (The Red Thread) Although many of the prostitutes don't join the union. Since prostitution is legal, escort services are very upfront with their services.

An example agency: http://www.societyservice.com/home/

Rates are €750 for 2 hours. There are many brothels and sex / swinger clubs located throughout the Netherlands. Some escort services advertise a 'porn star' service where they will film you in your own porn video with a prostitute.



Amsterdam has many shops selling an almost endless variety of sex tools. Examples of sex tools are shown throughout the book.

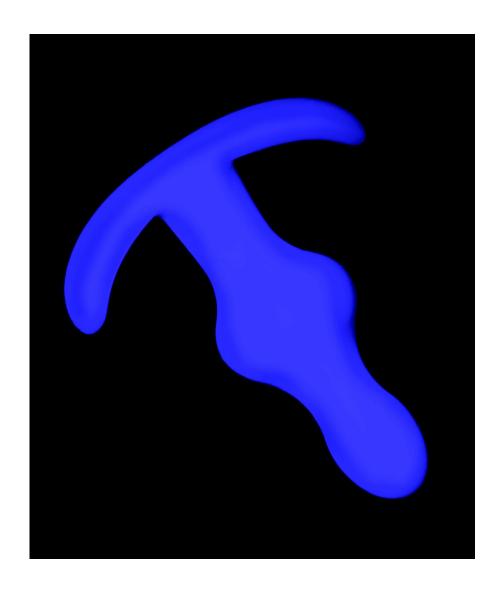
Opposite: The front window of a sex and head shop in the Red Light District.

Below: A glass sex tool.





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A favorite technique the prostitutes use for getting attention is the blacklight or ultraviolet light. The girls wear fluorescent bikinis and they are a standout in the dark.



All nighttime photographs of prostitutes in their display windows are available light and are completely candid in nature.

The photographs entitled 'The lights tell the story', 'A prostitute in a red room.' and 'A prostitute from Guatemala' were available light and posed.



Opposite: A transvestite / transgender prostitute. Below: De Wallen prostitute circa 1967. The only thing that has changed over the years is the technology. Many of the prostitutes pass time on their cell phones.



De Wallen, Amsterdam, 08-09-1967. Photographer: unknown, Dutch National Archives, The Hague, ANP scans (ANP 222) collection, license CC-BY-SA



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This fellow is having a hard time concentrating on the map when he has so much to look at in the Red Light District.



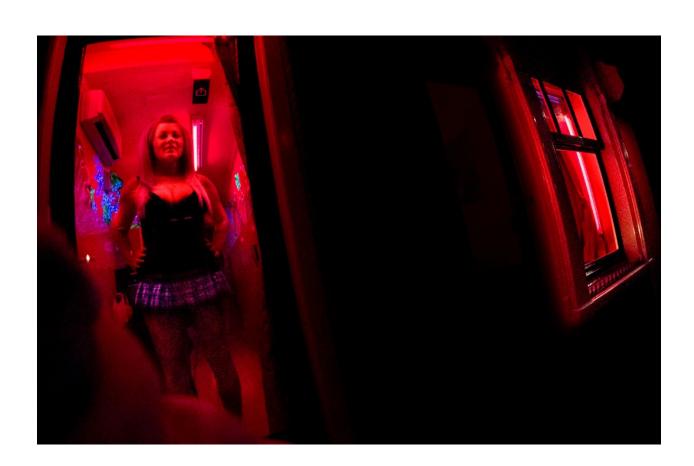


The prostitutes rent the kamers or red rooms for 8 hour shifts. Day shift rates are about €85, nighttime rates are €115. The flashier / better locations may go for €150.

The average rate for basic sex is €50 for about 15 to 20 minutes, special requests cost more as do drunks. Sex is usually protected with a condom. Few prostitutes will kiss their customers.

Some customers like being spanked, tied up, abused, peed or pooped on...all for an extra fee. Some men do not have sex and only talk with the prostitute or rub baby oil on her. Sometimes couples come in and the wife or girlfriend watches.

I was told about 40% to 50% of the customers are married. On a good shift, a prostitute may have sex with 6 to 10 men. Most red rooms come equipped with a panic button for the prostitute to use if they have any problems. Prostitutes that work in clubs, escort agencies or from home can charge from €150 to €750+ per hour.



Some of the Red Light District is located along narrow walkways and alleys where two people walking abreast can hardly pass by each other. It is very hard to photograph in these areas due to the close quarters. Prostitutes are viewing you from both sides and from the front and behind.



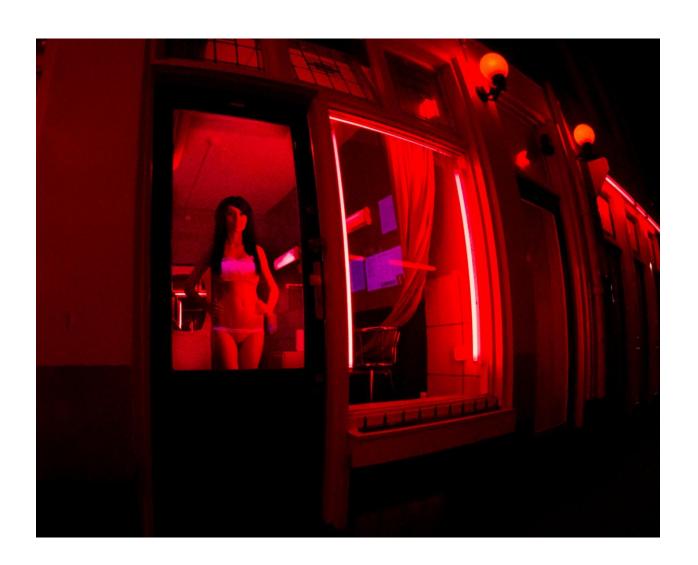
De Wallen is kept very dark. It is like trying to photograph in a wet darkroom that is lit only by the red safelight. You have to be very discrete because the prostitutes employ enforcers or have pimps to 'discourage' photography.

If a prostitute has an inkling you are taking her picture, she bangs on the her display window loudly with her ring finger to alert the enforcers. Sometimes she opens the door and starts screaming and chasing down the photographer.

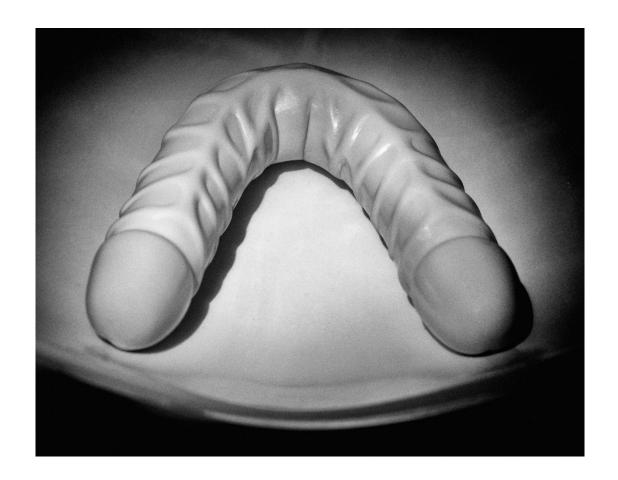
The enforcers will demand the memory card or film from the photographer. If a scuffle ensues the camera may get tossed into the canal. If the prostitute is of a meaner nature she might open her glass door and throw bleach or ammonia on the photographer.

Of course, dealing with all these problems IS the specialty of the expert documentary photographer whose job it is to bring home the best possible images under adverse conditions.



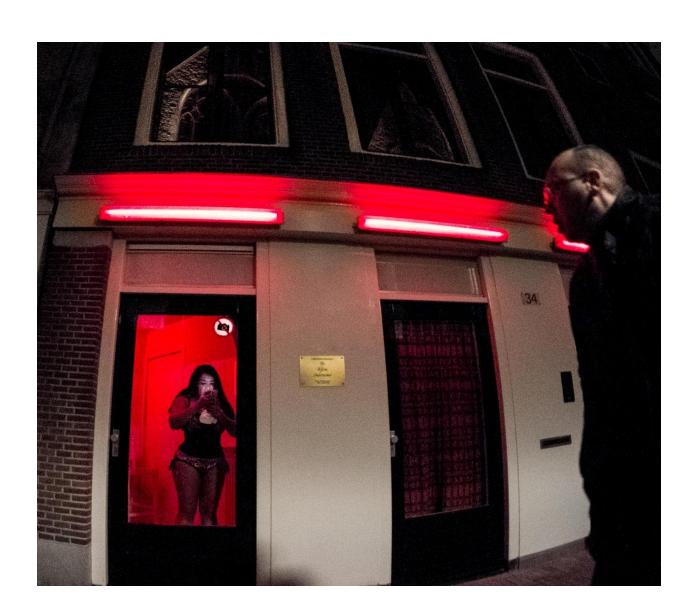


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A red room in the Oudekerksplein.

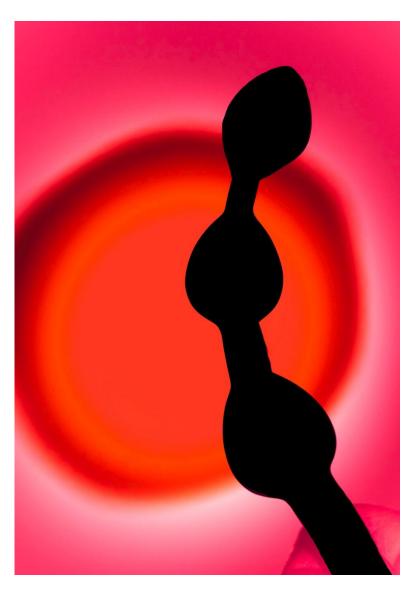


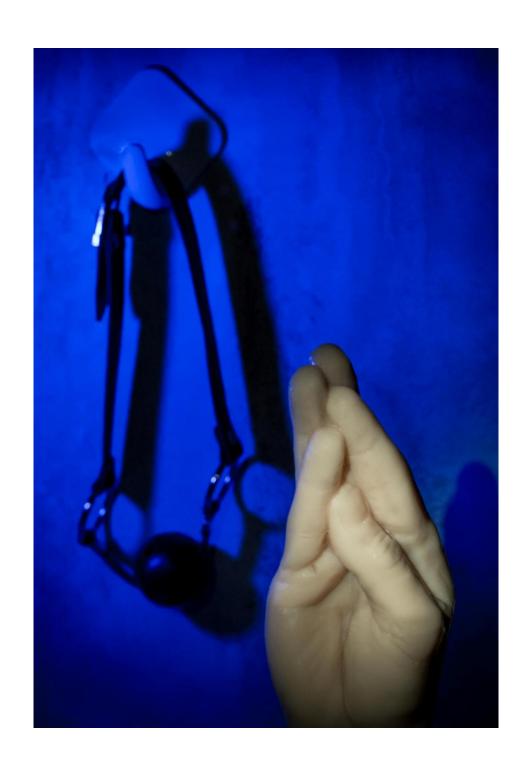
I personally met and spoke with 40 to 50 girls. I could not find any Dutch prostitutes working Amsterdam's Red Light District. The girls were mainly gypsies from Serbia, Romania, Russia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Spain and a few girls from Guatemala and Africa.

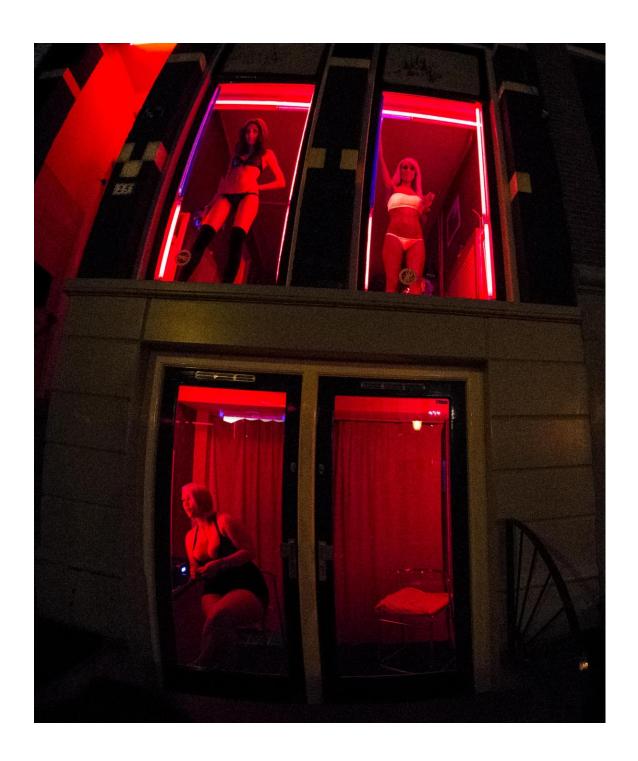




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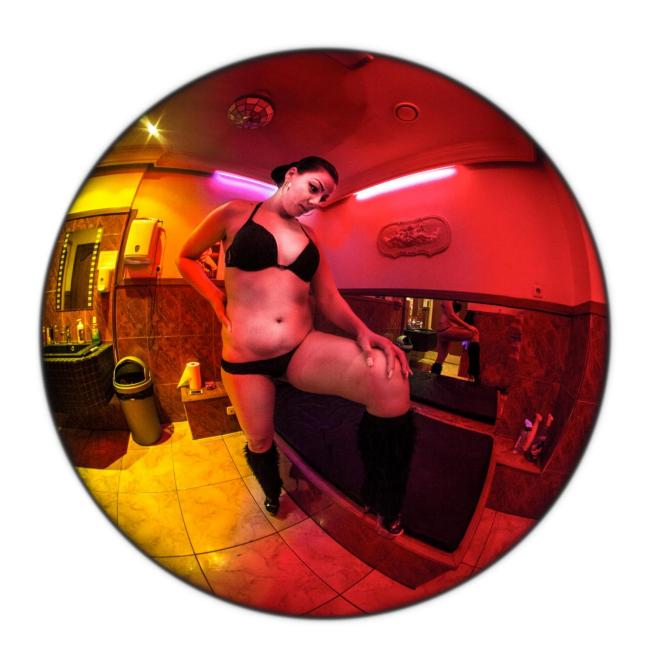


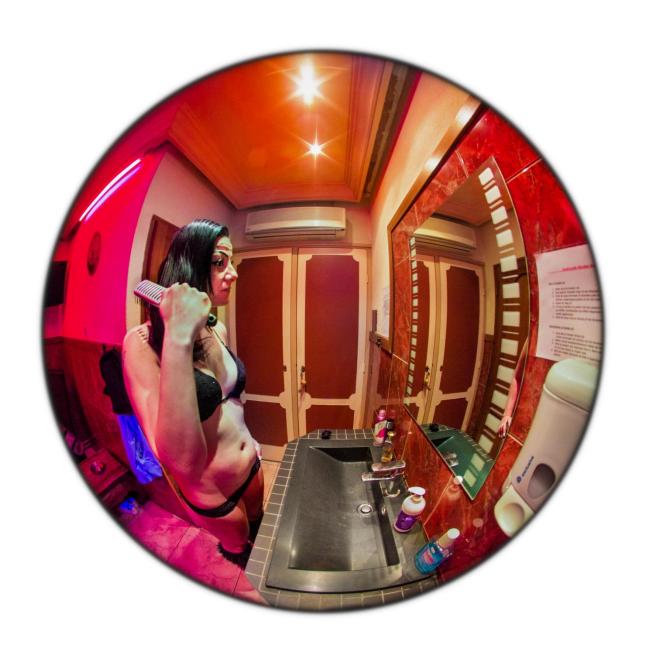
Opposite: Example how a cock ring is worn - from Bikers' Mardi Gras.





A prostitute in a red room. This is an example of a well equipped, higher-end red room.







A 'tag team' duo for fulfilling a threesome fantasy.



A prostitute from Guatemala. She told me she worked as a prostitute to send money back home to her family. She had agreed to let me shoot her for 5 - 10 minutes with her face out. I had to pay her 3 times for photo access. She reneged after each payment and asked for more money. This photo was a test exposure...my first one. As soon as she heard the shutter click, she was all done and wanted payment #4.

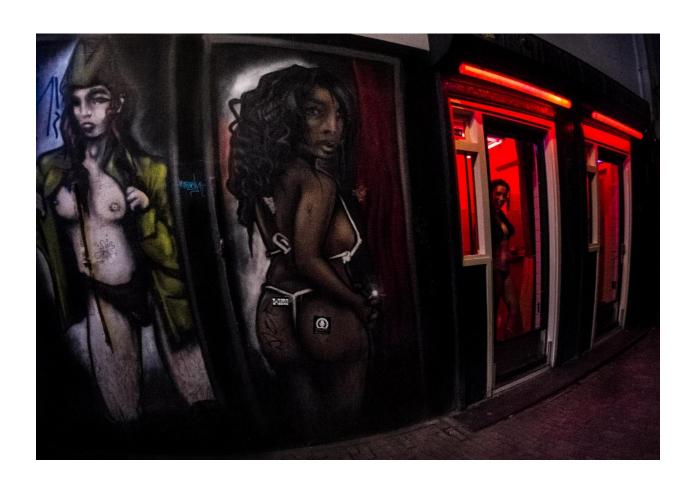
She kept used condoms on her nightstand next to the bed. The decor was dated, the subterranean basement style room was very small. The ceiling was very low, which made the room seem that much smaller. This is an example of a budget-priced red room. The panic alarm (small white button on the wall) is on the extreme left border of the photo.

Almost all the prostitutes I paid for posed photos proved to be very unreliable and ended up cheating me. I have a low tolerance for dealing with unreliable people. So, I gave up on paying for posed photos and concentrated on candid street photography which I have complete control over and does not require any cooperation from the subjects.



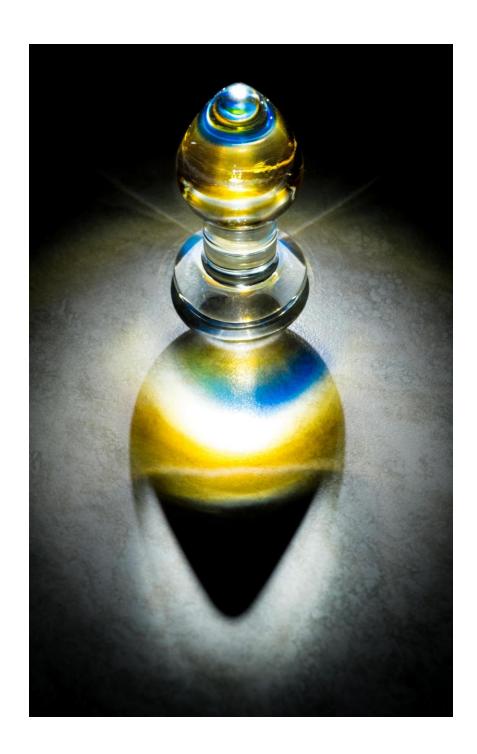






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From drunks fighting it out, to photographers that get caught taking pictures of prostitutes or drug deals gone wrong - there is always something interesting happening in De Wallen.



The minimum age for a prostitute in the Netherlands is 18. (I read it was recently changed to 21.) The minimum age for a customer is 16.

Europe on the whole allows for legal 'underage sex' as it is called in the U.S.A. For example, in Spain the age of consent is 13. In Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Montenegro, Portugal, San Marino and Serbia the age of consent is 14.

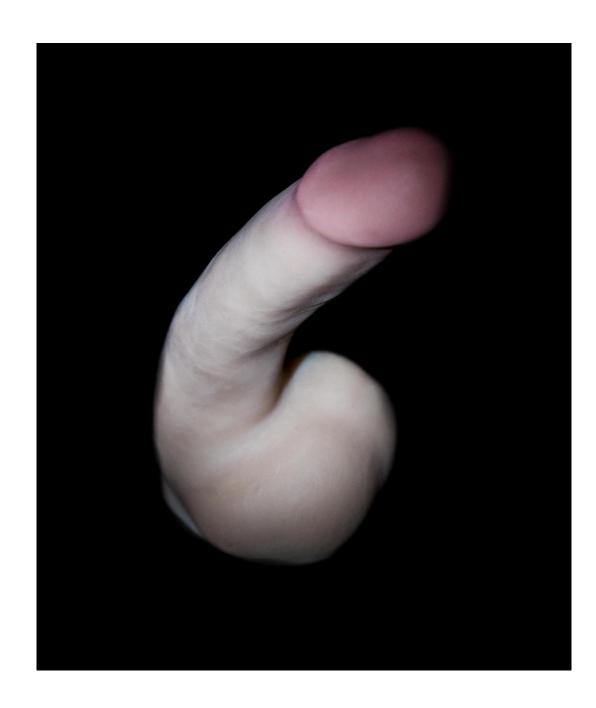
In Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Monaco, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden the age of consent is 15. So laws vary greatly by region and by custom.

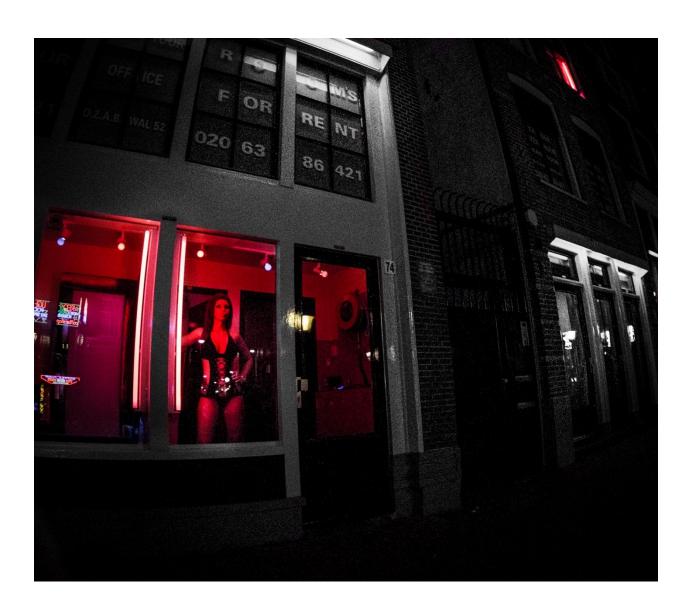
All statistics are from the Wikipedia.



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The first thing the girls do when they get a customer is to draw the curtains.





The best time to relax and take a break in De Wallen is at sunrise. The light is soft and warm and the streets are practically empty.



Edition Information

De Wallen: Amsterdam's Red Light District, is a hand-printed artist's book produced by Daniel D. Teoli Jr. in a limited edition of 50 signed and numbered books and 2 artist's proof books. This book is printed on DUO acid free paper with an Epson Pro 3880 and R2000 printer using Epson UltraChrome archival pigment inks. A 22mm 4:1 pitch coil was used in binding the book.

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